

## CARCASS-SCAVENGING BY *TAENIOPODA RETICULATA* (ORTHOPTERA: ACRIDIDAE) IN COSTA RICA<sup>1</sup>

Allen M. Young<sup>2</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** A single observation of feeding by a female *Taeniopoda reticulata* on a crushed, unidentified acridid (definitely not *Taeniopoda*) in a Costa Rican cacao plantation is described.

In the southwestern United States, the acridid grasshopper ("western horse lubber grasshopper") *Taeniopoda eques* (Burmeister) feeds on carrion and "incapacitated grasshoppers" in addition to its usual diet of foliage (Whitman and Orsak 1985). Aside from field collections and taxonomic studies (e.g., Hebard 1925), little information has been published on the natural history of Central American species. *Taeniopoda reticulata* (Fabricius) occurs in the tropical wet forest region of the Caribbean watershed of Costa Rica (Hebard 1925). Herein I report, primarily pictorially, the feeding by one female *T. reticulata* on the crushed carcass of an unidentified acridid in Costa Rica.

On 22 September 1985 (1000 hrs) an adult female *T. reticulata* was encountered feeding on the freshly-crushed carcass of an unidentified acridid in a dirt road within the cacao plantations at "Finca Experimental La Lola," near Siquirres (10°06'N, 83°30'W; 50 m. elev.), Limon Province, Costa Rica. Feeding behavior was noted and photographed and the immediate area (approximately 100 sq. m.) of grassy road side was examined for additional individuals of *T. reticulata*.

### DISCUSSION

The individual of *T. reticulata* was perched over the acridid carcass and at that moment of discovery, the lubber was feeding on the ventral thoracic area of the carcass (Fig. 1). Within approximately 20 minutes virtually all of the thoracic and abdominal cavities were devoured. The carcass appeared fresh and moist, probably recently (same morning) crushed by wheels of a jeep or truck. The condition of the carcass may have been similar to that of an "incapacitated" grasshopper cannibalized by *T. eques* in the United States (Whitman and Orsak 1985). No ants or other scavenging insects were present when *T. reticulata* was feeding on the road-kill. Several adult male *T. reticulata* were found on low vegetation along the

<sup>1</sup>Received December 23, 1985. Accepted February 26, 1986.

<sup>2</sup>Invertebrate Zoology Section, Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee, WI 53233



Fig. 1. *Taeniopoda reticulata* feeding on the carcass of an unidentified acridid in Costa Rica, roadside. No other individuals were found feeding along the road that morning. While some orthopterans may be frequent predators of insects (e.g., Manley 1985), *T. reticulata* may opportunistically feed on insect carcasses, but a large portion of the diet of *T. eques* consists of insects, including ants (Whitman and Orsak 1985). Although the response of moving (crawling) quickly when disturbed is typical for *T. reticulata*, I was able to approach and observe this individual at very close range (10-15 cm) without any apparent disturbance.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was funded by the American Cocoa Research Institute of The United States of America.

#### LITERATURE CITED

- Hebard, M. 1925. A revision of the genus *Taeniopoda* (Orthoptera, Acrididae, Cyrtacanthacrinae). Trans. Amer. Entomol. Soc. (Philadelphia) 50: 253-274.
- Manley, G.V. 1985. The predatory status of *Conocephalus longipennis* (Orthoptera: Tettigoniidae) in rice fields of West Malaysia. Ent. News 96: 167-170.
- Whitman, D.W. and L.J. Orsak. 1985. Biology of *Taeniopoda eques* (Orthoptera: Acrididae) in southwestern Arizona. Ann. Entomol. Soc. Amer. 78: 811-825.